

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A method for providing notification information corresponding to a communication identity, the method comprising:

5 accessing notification setting information that identifies a temporal condition including at least one temporal period during which notification information is to be provided or withheld, wherein a beginning and an end of the at least one temporal period are specified in the notification setting information in advance of the beginning of the temporal period;

determining whether the temporal condition is satisfied; and

10 controlling dissemination of notification information related to the communications identity based on whether the temporal condition is satisfied.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the notification information indicates whether the communications identity is available to communicate.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the notification information indicates whether the communications identity is logged on to a particular communications system.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein the notification information indicates whether the communications identity is logged on to an instant messaging system.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the notification information indicates a geographic location of the communications identity.

6. The method of claim 5 further comprising controlling a granularity at which the geographic location is disseminated based on notification setting information.

7. The method of claim 6 further comprising permitting a recipient of geographic location to control the granularity of the geographic location displayed.

8. The method of claim 6 wherein the granularity at which the geographic location is disseminated comprises one of a street address, a city, a metropolitan area, an area within a metropolitan area, a region of a country, or a country.

9. The method of claim 6 wherein controlling the granularity at which the geographic location is disseminated comprises doing so based on notification setting information that is associated with a participant list.

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10. The method of claim 6 wherein controlling the granularity at which the geographic location is disseminated comprises doing so based on notification setting information that is associated with a category of communications identities on a participant list.

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11. The method of claim 1 further comprising accessing one of many participant lists, each of which identifies multiple communications identities designated by a user, wherein:

15 accessing notification setting information comprises doing so for one or more participant lists that identifies a temporal condition for notifying communications identities on a participant list such that the temporal condition includes at least one temporal period during which notification information is to be provided or withheld, and

controlling dissemination comprises controlling dissemination of notification information relating to communications identities identified on the at least one of many participant lists.

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12. The method of claim 11 wherein different temporal conditions are associated with different ones of the participant lists.

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13. The method of claim 11 wherein determining whether the temporal condition is satisfied comprises doing so for at least one but less than all of the participant lists.

14. The method of claim 11 wherein controlling dissemination comprises providing notification information.

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15. The method of claim 11 wherein controlling dissemination comprises restricting the provision of notification information.

16. The method of claim 1 further comprising transmitting notification information between a mobile communications device capable of transmitting voice communications and an instant messaging system.

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17. The method of claim 16 further comprising storing notification setting information on the mobile communications device.

18. The method of claim 16 further comprising storing notification setting information on the instant messaging system.

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19. The method of claim 1 wherein notification setting information comprises notification information that is associated with one of multiple categories of notification information.

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20. The method of claim 19 wherein notification setting information comprises multiple notification setting information components, each of which is associated with a hierarchy of notification categories.

21. The method of claim 19 wherein at least one of the multiple categories comprises a user-definable category.

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22. The method of claim 19 wherein at least one of the multiple categories is associated with a participant list identifying multiple communications identities designated by a user.

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23. The method of claim 1 further comprising displaying an alert that indicates the notification setting information that is to be applied based on the temporal condition.

24. The method claim 23 further comprising prompting a user to modify the notification setting information that is to be applied based on the temporal condition.

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25. The method of claim 1, wherein controlling dissemination of notification information comprises denying dissemination of notification information, the method further comprising:

5 detecting an incoming communication associated with a user corresponding to the notification information; and  
alerting the user to the incoming communication.

26. The method of claim 25 wherein the incoming communication comprises an attempt to determine the geographic location of the user.

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27. The method of claim 25 wherein the incoming communication comprises an instant message sent to the user.

15 28. The method of claim 1 further comprising, when the temporal condition is satisfied such that availability of the user to communicate is hidden and the user indicates that a message is to be sent, displaying a prompt to alert the user that the availability of the user to communicate will be revealed when the message is sent.

20 29. The method of claim 1 wherein the temporal condition applies to all of several participant lists, each participant list identifying multiple communications identities designated by a user.

25 30. The method of claim 1 wherein the temporal condition applies to all individuals included in a participant list associated with the user.

31. The method of claim 1 wherein the temporal condition applied to at least one individual included in a participant list associated with the user differs from a temporal condition applied to at least one other individual included in the participant list.

30 32. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

accessing status information corresponding to availability of a communications identity included on a participant list that has multiple communications identities designed by a user, wherein:

accessing notification setting information comprises accessing notification setting information for one or more participant lists associated with the communications identity, the notification setting information indicating a temporal condition for notifying communication identities on one or more of the participant lists such that the condition includes a temporal period during which notification information is to be restricted, and

controlling the dissemination of notification information comprises, in response to a determination that the temporal condition is not satisfied, passively configuring the participant list to persistently conceal the status of the communications identity.

33. The method of claim 32 wherein persistently concealing the status of the communications identity comprises indicating that availability information for the communications identity is unknown.

34. The method of claim 32 wherein persistently concealing the status of the communications identity comprises indicating that the communications identity is not available to communicate.

35. The method of claim 34 wherein persistently concealing the status of the communications identity comprises indicating that the communications identity is not logged onto an instant message system used by the communications identity when the communications identity is logged onto the instant message system.

36. The method of claim 1, wherein the communications identity is a first communications identity, further comprising:

accessing information indicating that a first communications identity associated with a first mobile device is associated with a second communications identity such that the first communications identity corresponds to a natural person and the second communications identity corresponds to the natural person;

receiving geographical location information associated with the first mobile device;

accessing a participant list identifying communications identities designated by a user that are associated with the second communications identity; and

providing the geographical location information associated with the first mobile device to the communications identities of the participant list associated with the second communications identity.

37. The method of claim 36 wherein the participant list comprises a contact list of a mobile device capable of transmitting and receiving voice communications.

38. The method of claim 36 wherein the participant list comprises a participant list of an instant messaging system.

39. The method of claim 1 further comprising:  
accessing delegation information associated with a communications identity, the delegation information including multiple categories of communications identities and, for at least one of the multiple categories, identifying notification information modifications to be controlled;

receiving, from user identity associated with a category of the multiple categories, a modification of notification information regarding the notification setting information;

accessing delegation information associated with the category;  
determining whether the user identity is permitted to perform the modification based on the delegation information associated with the category; and

only permitting the modification to the notification setting information when the user identity is permitted to perform the modification.

40. The method of claim 39 wherein:  
the multiple categories comprise multiple categories in which at least two categories of the multiple categories are arranged in a hierarchical relationship such that a lower category is related to a higher category,

delegation information associated with the higher category also is associated with the lower category,

the user identity is associated with the lower category, and

only permitting the modification comprises only permitting the modification to the notification setting information when the user identity is permitted to perform the modification based on a determination whether the user identity is permitted to perform the modification based on the delegation information associated with the higher category.

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41. The method of claim 39 wherein multiple categories comprise multiple categories that include a government category, a financier category, and a user category.

42. The method of claim 41 wherein the financier category comprises a business enterprise and the user category comprises an employee.

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43. The method of claim 41 wherein the financier category comprises a parent and the user category comprises a child of the parent.

44. A computer-readable medium or propagated signal having embodied thereon a computer program configured to provide notification information corresponding to a communication identity, the medium or signal comprising one or more code segments configured to:

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access notification setting information that identifies a temporal condition including at least one temporal period during which notification information is to be provided or withheld, wherein a beginning and an end of the at least one temporal period are specified in the notification setting information in advance of the beginning of the temporal period;

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determine whether the temporal condition is satisfied; and

control dissemination of notification information related to the communications

identity based on whether the temporal condition is satisfied.

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45. The medium of claim 44 wherein the notification information indicates whether the communications identity is available to communicate.

46. The medium of claim 45 wherein the notification information indicates whether the communications identity is logged on to a particular communications system.

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47. The medium of claim 46 wherein the notification information indicates whether the communications identity is logged on to an instant messaging system.

5 48. The medium of claim 44 wherein the notification information indicates a geographic location of the communications identity.

49. The medium of claim 44 wherein the one or more code segments are further configured to:

10 access one of many participant lists, each of which identifies multiple communications identities designated by a user,  
access notification setting information for one or more participant lists that identifies a temporal condition for notifying communications identities on a participant list such that the temporal condition includes at least one temporal period during which notification information is to be provided or withheld, and  
15 control dissemination of notification information relating to communications identities identified on the at least one of many participant lists.

50. The medium of claim 44 wherein the one or more code segments are configured to transmit notification information between a mobile communications device  
20 capable of transmitting voice communications and an instant messaging system.

51. The medium of claim 44 wherein notification setting information comprises notification information that is associated with one of multiple categories of notification information.  
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52. The medium of claim 44 wherein the one or more code segments are further configured to:

access status information corresponding to availability of a communications identity included on a participant list that has multiple communications identities designed by the  
30 user,

access notification setting information for one or more participant lists associated with the communications identity, the notification information indicating a temporal



condition for notifying communication identities on one or more of the participant lists such that the condition includes a temporal period during which notification information is to be restricted, and

passively configure the participant list to persistently conceal the status of the communications identity in response to a determination that the temporal condition is not satisfied.

53. The medium of claim 44 wherein the communications identity is a first communications identity and the one or more code segments are further configured to:

access information indicating that a first communications identity associated with a first mobile device is associated with a second communications identity such that the first communications identity corresponds to a natural person and the second communications identity corresponds to the natural person;

receive geographical location information associated with the first mobile device;

access a participant list identifying communications identities designated by a user that are associated with the second communications identity; and

provide the geographical location information associated with the first mobile device to the communications identities of the participant list associated with the second communications identity.

54. The medium of claim 44 wherein the one or more code segments configured to:

access delegation information associated with a communications identity, the delegation information including multiple categories of communications identities and, for at least one of the multiple categories, identifying notification information modifications to be controlled;

receive, from user identity associated with a category of the multiple categories, a modification of notification information regarding the notification setting information;

access delegation information associated with the category;

determine whether the user identity is permitted to perform the modification based on the delegation information associated with the category; and

only permit the modification to the notification setting information when the user identity is permitted to perform the modification.

55. A system for providing notification information corresponding to a communication identity, the system configured to:

access notification setting information that identifies a temporal condition including at least one temporal period during which notification information is to be provided or withheld, wherein a beginning and an end of the at least one temporal period are specified in the notification setting information in advance of the beginning of the temporal period;

determine whether the temporal condition is satisfied; and

control dissemination of notification information relating to the communications identity based on whether the temporal condition is satisfied.

56. The system of claim 55 wherein the notification information indicates whether the communications identity is available to communicate.

57. The system of claim 56 wherein notification information indicates whether the communications identity is logged on to a particular communications system.

58. The system of claim 57 wherein the notification information indicates whether the communications identity is logged on to an instant messaging system.

59. The system of claim 55 wherein the notification information indicates a geographic location of the communications identity.

60. The system of claim 55 further configured to:

access one of many participant lists, each participant list identifying multiple communications identities designated by a user;

access notification setting information comprises accessing notification setting information for one or more participant lists that identifies a temporal condition for notifying communications identities on a participation list such that the temporal condition includes at

least one temporal period during which notification information is to be provided or withheld; and

control dissemination comprises controlling dissemination of notification information relating to communications identities identified on the at least one of many participant lists.

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61. The system of claim 55 further configured to transmit notification information between a mobile communications device capable of transmitting voice communications and an instant messaging system.

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62. The system of claim 55 wherein notification setting information comprises notification information that is associated with one of multiple categories of notification information.

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63. The system of claim 55 further configured to:  
access status information corresponding to availability of a communications identity included on a participant list that has multiple communications identities designed by the user, wherein:

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access notification setting information comprises accessing notification setting information for one or more participant lists associated with the communications identity, the notification information indicating a temporal condition for notifying communication identities on one or more of the participant lists such that the condition includes a temporal period during which notification information is to be restricted, and

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control the dissemination of notification information comprises, in response to a determination that the temporal condition is not satisfied, passively configuring the participant list to persistently conceal the status of the communications identity.

64. The system of claim 55, wherein the communications identity is a first communications identity and the system is further configured to:

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access information indicating that a first communications identity associated with a first mobile device is associated with a second communications identity such that the first communications identity corresponds to a natural person and the second communications identity corresponds to the natural person;

receive geographical location information associated with the first mobile device;  
 access a participant list identifying communications identities designated by a user  
 that are associated with the second communications identity; and  
 provide the geographical location information associated with the first mobile device  
 5 to the communications identities of the participant list associated with the second  
 communications identity.

65. The system of claim 55 further configured to:

access delegation information associated with a communications identity, the  
 10 delegation information including multiple categories of communications identities and, for at  
 least one of the multiple categories, identifying notification information modifications to be  
 controlled;

receive, from user identity associated with a category of the multiple categories, a  
 modification of notification information regarding the notification setting information;

15 access delegation information associated with the category;

determine whether the user identity is permitted to perform the modification based on  
 the delegation information associated with the category; and

only permit the modification to the notification setting information when the user  
 identity is permitted to perform the modification.

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66. A system for providing notification information corresponding to a  
 communication identity, the system comprising:

means for accessing notification setting information that identifies a temporal  
 condition including at least one temporal period during which notification information is to  
 25 be provided or withheld, wherein a beginning and an end of the at least one temporal period  
 are specified in the notification setting information in advance of the beginning of the  
 temporal period;

means for determining whether the temporal condition is satisfied; and

means for controlling dissemination of notification information relating to the  
 30 communications identity in response to a result of the determination.